

74

**Testimony Before the Planning and Development Committee
In Opposition to Raised Bill Number 5268
An Act Concerning Tax Assessments for Special Taxing Districts
March 1, 2010
Jeffrey Walter
President, Property Owners Association of Lake Hayward**

My name is Jeffrey Walter and I serve as President of the Property Owners Association of Lake Hayward in East Haddam. I am here to speak in opposition to Bill 5268, AAC Tax Assessments for Special Tax Districts. This bill proposes a mechanism for special tax districts to change from the current mill-rate based method for assessing expenses to property owners to a flat rate.

It is my understanding that the impetus for this bill comes from a small group of individuals who reside within one particular special tax district. In general, I believe it is bad public policy to change state statutes that have a statewide impact in order to satisfy the goals of a few people. In this case, Bill 5268 would affect hundreds of special tax districts throughout the State, most of which are probably unaware that this proposed legislation even exists.

One might argue why not allow special tax districts the option of making this change. The legislation doesn't require it, so what is the harm. But, section (c) establishes a very flawed process that would enable a few activist property owners to push through a change to a flat tax through referendum, with no minimum participation requirement. If a special tax district has 150 voters, say, a vote could be called by as few as 15 owners. Then, the vote would carry on a two-thirds majority. If 21 property owners voted, the 15 who called for the vote could carry the day. This is not such an implausible scenario. Many special tax districts are lake associations where the majority of properties are seasonal. A vote held in the middle of the winter, advertised in a weekly local newspaper, to which most owners don't even subscribe, could very well have such a disastrous outcome- this is tyranny of the minority.

Finally, there is already a way that a special tax district which wants to convert to a flat fee can do it. It can petition the legislature to dissolve the district and become an Association. That is the route that the proponents of this bill should take.

I thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

Jeffrey Walter
(860) 430-9143
jlw100@comcast.net